

March Teacher Feature: Linda Brown, K-12 Art Teacher

*Art has the role in education of helping children become themselves instead of like everyone else.”
~Sydney Gurewitz Clemens*



Linda Brown is in her second year of teaching K-12 art and, wow—what can she say but time flies when there is never a dull moment. This is technically Linda’s third year at Clearbrook-Gonvick Schools. She taught reading intervention to elementary students her first year. When the art teaching vacancy came about, it was destiny at its best. She really feels this job was meant for her.

Linda was born in Minneapolis and raised just outside of there in Elk River. After graduating from high school she came to Bemidji to go to college and never really left. She would move away but would always return to the North Woods. Linda loves the excitement and culture that

Cities bring, but she needed a more tranquil area to hang her hat.

Linda has no children, rather, she has a five-year-old bull-boxer dog (who is 'beautifully') and a two-year-old part Siamese cat who bring a great deal of joy to her life. She has two nieces (one is also an art teacher), two nephews, four great nieces and two great nephews who are all like children/grandchildren to her. Having never had children of her own, it seems she is "the fun aunt." She can live with that!

Why did you choose to be a teacher? I went into teaching because it is one of the most important jobs in the world. When you have a passion for something, it feels natural to want to share its wonders with creative young minds. I get to do that with children of all ages and abilities and from a variety of different backgrounds. As much as I feel "at home" in the North Woods, I feel in the classroom, as well.

What did you do before coming to Clearbrook-Gonvick? Eleven years prior to my arrival at C-G, I taught in the art department at Bemidji State University. Unfortunately, in 2011, mandated cuts to education caused BSU to discontinue the visual arts program and merge with design technology. The cuts cost several people their jobs. I was one of those individuals. This was a rather sad, yet interesting and hopeful time for me. I had to get creative, so I carved out a place for myself and found all sorts of odd jobs in order to make ends meet. Additionally, I have always had my studio life on the side where I design and do privately commissioned jewelry work.

What is the best part of your job at Clearbrook-Gonvick? The best part of my job is the students. I think, on a daily basis, that I learn as much, possibly more, from them as they do from me. The student-teacher relationship is truly a special one.

What is the biggest challenge of your job? The challenges of teaching are many and art has its own unique ones. One of my biggest challenges—hour to hour—day to day—week to week—is classroom/studio maintenance including the monitoring of infinite and varied (K-12) materials, tools and equipment. Keeping a safe studio is a big part of daily maintenance. With over 100 students using the art room daily, it is imperative that safety measures and overall maintenance are a top priority. This is a challenge indeed!

If you could have any job in the world - what would it be? Why? Besides teaching, the ideal job for me would be one I created myself. Could I be a professional "traveler—artist—and writer"? Could I travel the world where I could write my thoughts, visually record what I see, and create art from my experiences. Since the pay would probably not be very good, in actuality, I would like to be an interior designer. I love designing comfortable spaces to live in. There is a catch to that—I would most likely have to live in a big city to make a go of it. I am not fond of living in highly populated areas, therefore teaching is ideal for me because one can do that—what you love—most anywhere in rural America.

What do you do when you are not working at the school? When I am not working at school, I generally stay pretty busy working in my art studio. At present, however, I am working on remodeling two houses and am creating a small apartment at another. The latter project is my real "baby," because it is a kind of a work of art itself. I hand built cabinets and a snack bar and have done a unique design tiling in both the kitchen and bathroom. I love shopping second hand stores, rummage sales and flea markets looking for things to incorporate into my remodeling. Besides remodeling, I also love to hike and roller-skate. I have racked up many hiking miles, coupled with truly amazing hiking experiences from around the world.

What is something you really enjoy about the SPRING? I have two favorite SPRING events. One is to be where I can hear the peeper frogs begin their first simultaneous peeping. The second event is being able to drive with all four windows down, listening to my favorite music and feeling the warm wind all around me.

What are your favorite aspects of the Clearbrook-Gonvick community? My favorite aspect of the Clearbrook-Gonvick community is just that; the sense of community we have at school. It is a place where different cultures come together in harmony, where you can count on one another, where you feel "at home". When I started teaching here, I was amazed at how willing everyone is to help me "learn the ropes" of a new school environment. The community itself has the same feel. For example, this past winter, as I was working on the apartment, a neighbor (who I had met only once on the street) came over three or four times with a Bobcat and removed snow from my driveway. I could get to the place, load and unload materials and tools without struggling through the snow. I didn't have to ask anyone, because someone I barely knew came to my rescue. He saw the need and acted out of the kindness in his heart to help a near stranger.

A now a few words from the students Ms. Brown teaches...

What do you think Ms. Brown was like when she was in high school? "Probably very artistic and fun." "Ms. Brown said she was more of a quiet trouble maker in high school." "She was

very good at art and always smiling.” “Wild” “A party animal” “Very outgoing and spoke her mind” “She was the most creative one there and doodled on everything.” “I think she was hyper and funny.”

What do you think Ms. Brown does when she is not here at school? “Work on houses and play with her dog.” “I think Ms. Brown works on her house.” “She paints canvases at her house” “Chills with her dog” “Hangs out at home” “Always busy and with her dog.” “I think she is at home relaxing with her dog and dressing her up.”

What job do you think Ms. Brown would have if she was not an art teacher? “Probably a house decorator” “I think Ms. Brown could have been a wedding coordinator or a house decorator.” A seller and presenter of art.” “A jeweler” “English teacher or a waitress” “A jeweler” “I think she would be a professional dog mom and would be famous for her homemade dog fashions.”

What is one of the best things about Ms. Brown? “She always is positive and outgoing.” “How many art skills she uses in class is amazing.” “She gives me good advice on how to make my art better.” “She is funny,” “Her personality, humor and kind heart,” “She’s funny,” “The best thing about Ms. Brown is her sense of humor and always giving us the funniest advice.”

What do you think is Ms. Brown's favorite thing to do? “Use her imagination to create art pieces.” “Paint paintings,” “To paint nature,” “Hang with her dog,” “Art” “Be with her dog,” “I think Ms. Brown’s favorite thing to do is get inspired for new projects for us to do.”

What is one thing Ms. Brown ALWAYS says? “Put the broom away.” “I didn’t eat lunch.” “She laughs,” “Listen up,” “Don’t cross the red line,” “Please ask before touching anything,” “Listen up.”

Where would you send Ms. Brown on vacation? “France because of all the art pieces.” “I would send Ms. Brown to Italy for all the architecture.” “Bahamas,” “Colorado,” “Europe,” “I would send Ms. Brown on a vacay to Jamaica. I think she would like it.” “I would send her to Europe.” “Mexico or Hawaii.”